

THE DETECTIVE

In April 1981, at my request, my mother went to a detective agency. She hired them to follow me, to report my daily activities, and to provide photographic evidence of my existence.

beyond that she was free to do whatever she wanted. Doggedly and dispassionately, never questioning the absurdity of her task, Maria stuck it out to the end. She was just nineteen when she started, a young girl entirely on her own, and yet she managed to fend for herself and avoid major catastrophes, living the sort of adventure that boys her age only dream of. At one point in her travels, a co-worker gave her an old thirty-five millimeter camera, and without any prior training or experience, she began taking photographs. When she saw her father in Chicago a few months after that, she told him that she had finally found something she liked doing. She showed him some of her photographs, and on the strength of those early attempts, he offered to make a bargain with her. If she went on taking photographs, he said, he would cover her expenses until she was in a position to support herself. It didn't matter how long it took, but she wasn't allowed to quit. That was the story she told me in any case, and I never had grounds to disbelieve it. All during the years of our affair, a deposit of one thousand dollars showed up in Maria's account on the first of every month, wired directly from a bank in Chicago.

She returned to New York, sold her van, and moved into the loft on Duane Street, a large empty room located on the floor above a wholesale egg and butter business. The first months were lonely and disorienting for her. She had no friends, no life to speak of, and the city seemed menacing and unfamiliar, as if she had never been there before. Without any conscious motives, she began following strangers around the streets, choosing someone at random when she left her house in the morning and allowing that choice to determine where she went for the rest of the day. It became a method of acquiring new thoughts, of filling up the emptiness that seemed to have engulfed her. Eventually, she began going out with her camera and taking pictures of the people she followed. When she returned home in the evening, she would sit down and write about where she had been and what she had done, using the strangers' itineraries to speculate about their lives and, in some cases, to compose brief, imaginary biographies. That was more or less how Maria stumbled into her

career as an artist. Other works followed, all of them driven by the same spirit of investigation, the same passion for taking risks. Her subject was the eye, the drama of watching and being watched, and her pieces exhibited the same qualities one found in Maria herself: meticulous attention to detail, a reliance on arbitrary structures, patience bordering on the unendurable. In one work, she hired a private detective to follow her around the city. For several days, this man took pictures of her as she went about her rounds, recording her movements in a small notebook, omitting nothing from the account, not even the most banal and transitory events: crossing the street, buying a newspaper, stopping for a cup of coffee. It was a completely artificial exercise, and yet Maria found it thrilling that anyone should take such an active interest in her. Microscopic actions became fraught with new meaning, the driest routines were charged with uncommon emotion. After several hours, she grew so attached to the detective that she almost forgot she was paying him. When he handed in his report at the end of the week and she studied the photographs of herself and read the exhaustive chronologies of her movements, she felt as if she had become a stranger, as if she had been turned into an imaginary being.

For her next project, Maria took a temporary job as a chambermaid in a large midtown hotel. The point was to gather information about the guests, but not in any intrusive or compromising way. She intentionally avoided them in fact, restricting herself to what could be learned from the objects scattered about their rooms. Again she took photographs; again she invented life stories for them based on the evidence that was available to her. It was an archeology of the present, so to speak, an attempt to reconstitute the essence of something from only the barest fragments: a ticket stub, a torn stocking, a blood stain on the collar of a shirt. Some time after that, a man tried to pick up Maria on the street. She found him distinctly unattractive and rebuffed him. That same evening, by pure coincidence, she ran into him at a gallery opening in SoHo. They talked once again, and this time she learned from the man that he was leaving the next morning

Thursday, April 16, 1981, 10 A.M.

I am getting ready to go out. Outside, in the street, a man is waiting for me. He is a private detective. He is paid to follow me. I hired him to follow me, but he does not know that.

At 10:20 A.M. I go out. In the mailbox, a postcard from Mont Saint-Michel. I read: "Sophie, I think of you often. Vacation ... beautiful weather ... vacation. Hugs and kisses. See you soon. Patrick." The weather is clear, sunny. It's cold. I am wearing gray suede breeches, black tights, black shoes, and a gray raincoat. Over my shoulder a bright yellow bag, a camera. I take rue Gassendi and buy marigolds for eight francs at the flower shop. I enter Montparnasse cemetery and lay the flowers on Pierre V's grave, b. 1920 d. 1981. I continue through the cemetery. Every day, for years, when I was going to school, I took that same route. It pleased me to imagine that there was a man hidden in R's family vault, and that he survived only because of my love and the food I scrupulously left on his gravestone. At the cemetery exit, on boulevard Edgar-Quinet, I buy *Le Monde* and *Pariscope*.

At 10:40 A.M. I get to La Coupole, 102 boulevard du Montparnasse, where I have

an appointment with Nathalie M. I do not sit at our usual table, but closer to the window, and order a *café crème*. At 10:45 A.M. Nathalie M joins me. I've known her for years. She always seems so fragile. She is beautiful. I am superstitious, so I don't want to speak of "him", of the man who should be following me. I don't know if he is really here.

At 11:30 A.M. we leave La Coupole. Nathalie walks with me to a hair-dresser on rue Delambre. It is for "him" I am getting my hair done. To please him.

At 12:05 P.M. I leave the hair-dresser. My hair is electric; the young woman who hands me my raincoat is reassuring: "Outside, it will calm down." Then I walk towards Jardin du Luxembourg. I want to show "him" the streets, the places I love. I want "him" to be with me as I go through the Luxembourg, where I played as a child and where I received my first kiss in the spring of 1968. I keep my eyes lowered. I am afraid to see "him".

12:30 P.M. I am waiting for Eugene B, a publisher, beneath the statue of Danton at l'Odéon. We're supposed to talk about a book I would like to get published: five minutes go by.



My eyes meet, on the other side of the boulevard Saint-Germain, those of a man about twenty-two years old, five feet six inches tall, short straight light brown hair, who jumps suddenly and attempts a hasty and awkward retreat behind a car. It's "him". A stranger steps up to me and asks where I bought my raincoat. Eugene B comes at 12:40 P.M. He kisses me and takes me to an outdoor café nearby. At 1:05 P.M. we say goodbye. I head for the Panthéon. From a phone booth, I call Bernard F, whom I would very much like "him" to see. When I was nine, I was certain Bernard F was my father. Going through my mother's letters, I found and stole a letter he wrote which began: "My darling, I hope you are seriously thinking of sending our Sophie to boarding school...". When he came to visit my mother, I would sit on his lap and stare expectantly at him. Then Bernard F's visits became less frequent. I stopped sitting on his lap, everyone told me how much I looked like my father. By the age of twelve, I had forgotten this mistaken lineage. My call wakes him up. He tells me that he is not ready to cope with the street.

1:20 P.M. I get to my studio, located at 36 rue d'Ulm in the former premises of the Couvent de l'Adoration Réparatrice. A short stop to pick up some papers. At 1:30 P.M. I come out again. I decide to stroll around Paris. I take rue Soufflot, boulevards Saint-Michel and Saint-Germain. I'm afraid I've lost "him". Since our "meeting" at the Carrefour de l'Odéon, not once did I feel his presence. I walk in the middle of the street.

Arriving in front of 34 rue de Seine, Galerie Eric Fabre, I try to push open the glass door. It does not budge. Further down the same street, in front of number 6, I wait for H Roger-Viollet, Documentation Photographique, to open. I walk in at 2 P.M. and ask for the file on private detectives. I flip through the photographs: All the faces look older than "him" (I am reassured by his youth). I buy a portrait of Detective Lepage. As I raise my eyes, through the window, sitting on a bench across the street, the same young man I spotted at the Carrefour de l'Odéon. Now I trust him. I'm not afraid of losing him anymore. I've become a part of the life of X, private detective. I structured his day, Thursday, April 16, in much the same way that he has influenced mine.

At 2:10 P.M. I move on. I cross the Pont Royal and head for the Louvre. At 2:20 P.M., after walking quickly through the museum, I find myself in front of Titian's *Man with a Glove*. I have always liked this painting. The sad vacant eyes. The pouting mouth. The face as if beheaded resting on a lace collar. But above all, this hint of a mustache.

At 3:10 P.M. I leave the Louvre. In the garden of the Tuileries a photographer offers to take my picture with my camera. I accept. At 3:20 P.M. I stop at the Tuileries' outdoor café and order a beer. I take pleasure in watching "him" have his drink at the counter.

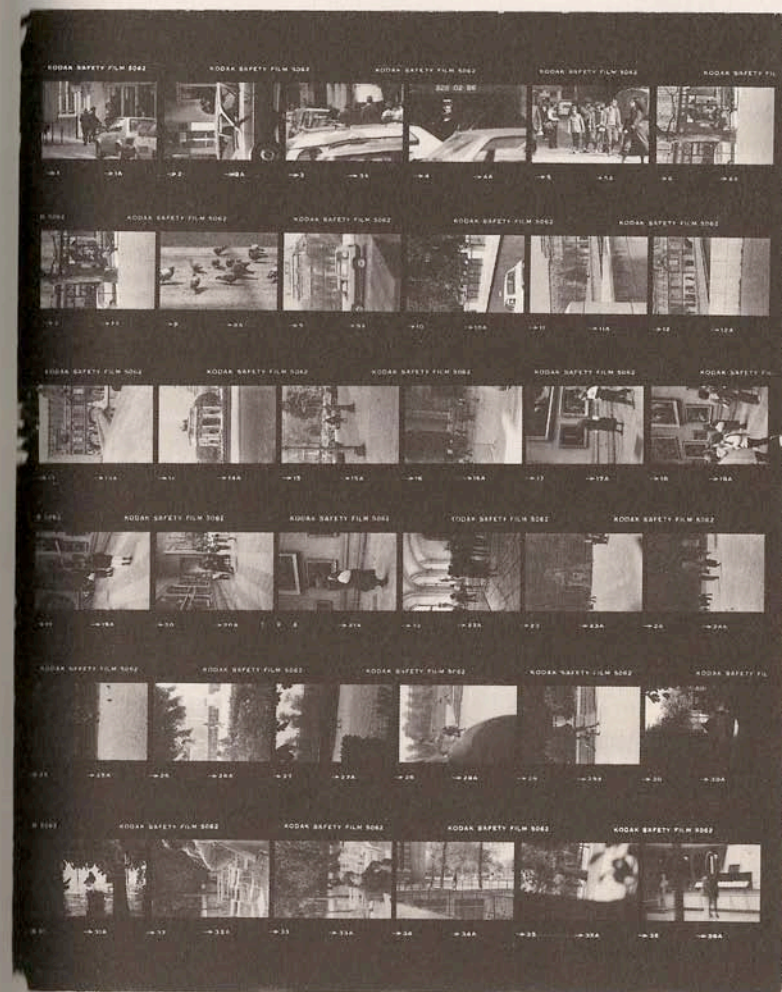
At 4 P.M. I leave the Tuileries, cross the Place de la Concorde. At 4:30 P.M. I enter the Palais de la Découverte (Discovery Exhibition center), which seemed

à propos. I have an appointment with Jacques M. I see his silhouette on the second floor. We meander from room to room. In a doorway "he" brushes past us. At 5:15 P.M. we leave the Palais de la Découverte. I walk with Jacques M to his car. I give him a kiss and continue my walk alone. I decide to rest in a movie theater. I walk up the Champs-Élysées and after hesitating between Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen* and Lautner's *Is It Reasonable?*, a detective comedy, I opt for the former and enter the Gaumont-Colisée at 5:25 P.M. Inside, I only think of "him". Is he enjoying this scattered, diffuse, and ephemeral day I have offered him—our day? Half an hour later, at 6 P.M., I leave the theater. I walk toward Châtelet.

At 7 P.M. I arrive at Galerie Chantal Crousel, 80 rue Quincampoix, for the Gilbert & George opening. There, I meet my father and take him outside with me. I want "him" to see my father. Back at the gallery I chat, forgetting "him" a little. At 8 P.M. friends take me by car to a party for George and Gilbert in an apartment at 120 avenue de Wagram. At midnight I leave in the same car to Le Palace, where we have been invited, still in honor of Gilbert & George. I get to know Dan J better, whom I met a few months earlier.

At 2 A.M. a taxi takes us both to the OK Bar at Vavin. I eat spaghetti and drink whiskey.

At 5 A.M. we grab another taxi to go to his hotel, the Hôtel Tiquetonne. I am drunk and fall asleep. Before closing my eyes, I think of "him". I wonder if he liked me, if he will think of me tomorrow.



REPORT

Thursday, April 16, 1981

At 10:00 a.m. I take up position outside the home of the subject, 22 rue Liancourt, Paris 14th.

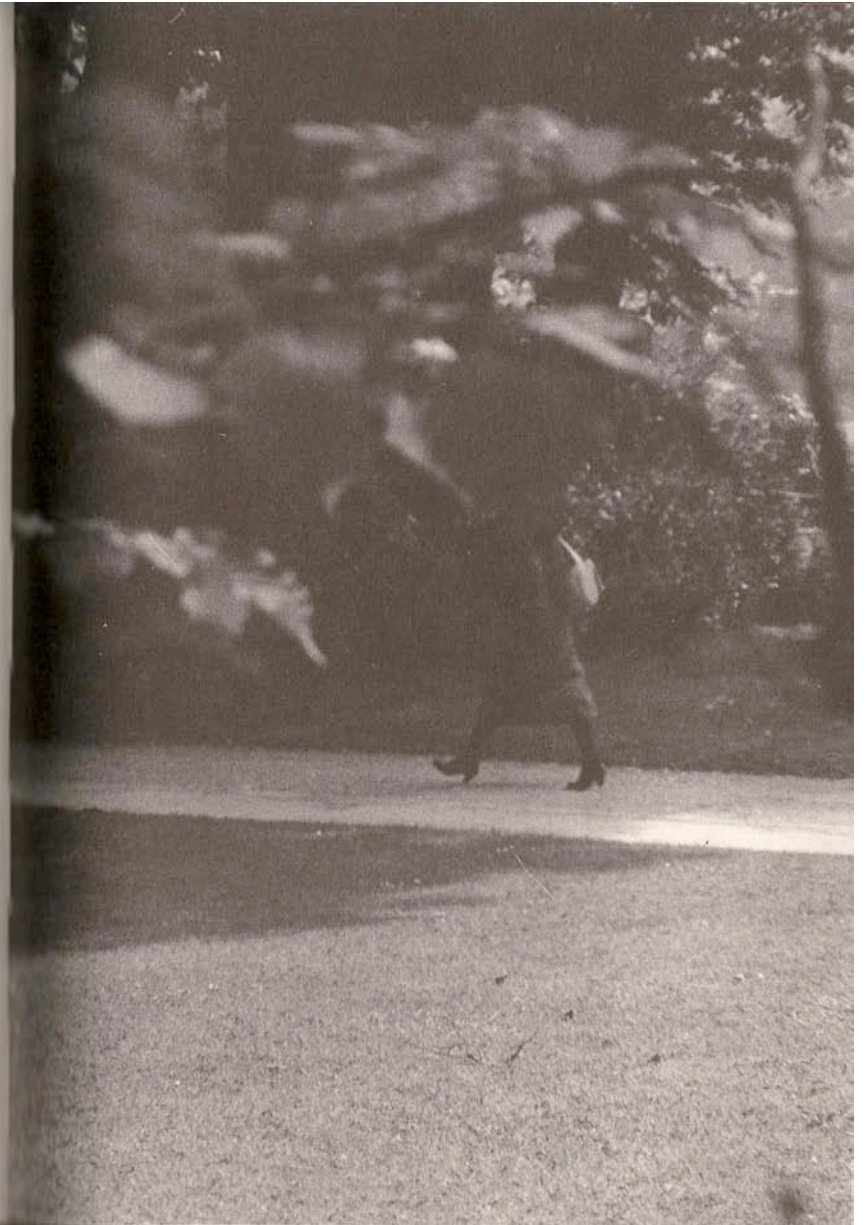
At 10:20 the subject leaves home. She is dressed in a gray raincoat, gray trousers, and wears black shoes with stockings of the same color. She carries a yellow shoulder bag.

At 10:23 the subject buys some daffodils at the florist's on the corner of rue Froidevaux and rue Gassendi, then enters Montparnasse cemetery at 5 rue Emile-Richard. She lays the flowers on a tomb then leaves the cemetery on the boulevard Edgar-Quinet side.

At 10:37 the subject buys a newspaper from the stand at 202 boulevard Raspail.



128 DOUBLE GAME II





At 10:40 she enters 100 boulevard Montparnasse.

At 11:32 the subject comes out of the building in the company of a friend aged approximately twenty-seven, height 5'5", of very stout build, long brown hair, wearing light brown trousers and a black sweater.

At 11:38 the subject says goodbye to her friend outside 21 rue Delambre and enters the Jacques Guérin hair salon.

At 12:08 the subject leaves the salon and crosses the Jardin du Luxembourg and appears to wait outside Odéon metro station.

At 12:40 a man of about sixty, 5'6", very stout, wearing a gray suit with a gray hat and spectacles with thick black frames, kisses the subject on the cheek.

At 12:43 the subject and the man sit down outside Le Condé, the café on the Carrefour de l'Odéon. They have something to drink and talk. The subject holds the man's arm.

At 1:02 the subject and the man part company.

At 1:18 the subject phones from a booth outside 13 rue d'Ulm. After making this call, she goes into the courtyard of 26 rue d'Ulm (church).

At 1:25 she comes out and walks down rue de Seine. She stops outside Galerie Chardin at number 36 but the gallery is closed. She comes back and goes into 8 rue de Seine, the shop "H. Roger-Viollet Documentation Photographique". She stays there for about eight minutes.





At 2:15 the subject enters the Louvre museum and walks to the Salle des Etats, stopping before the painting by Titian, "Man with a Glove". She takes notes and also a photograph. She stays in front of the painting for about half an hour.

At 3:10 she leaves the Louvre and crosses the Tuileries. She has herself photographed by a street photographer.



134 DOUBLE GAME II

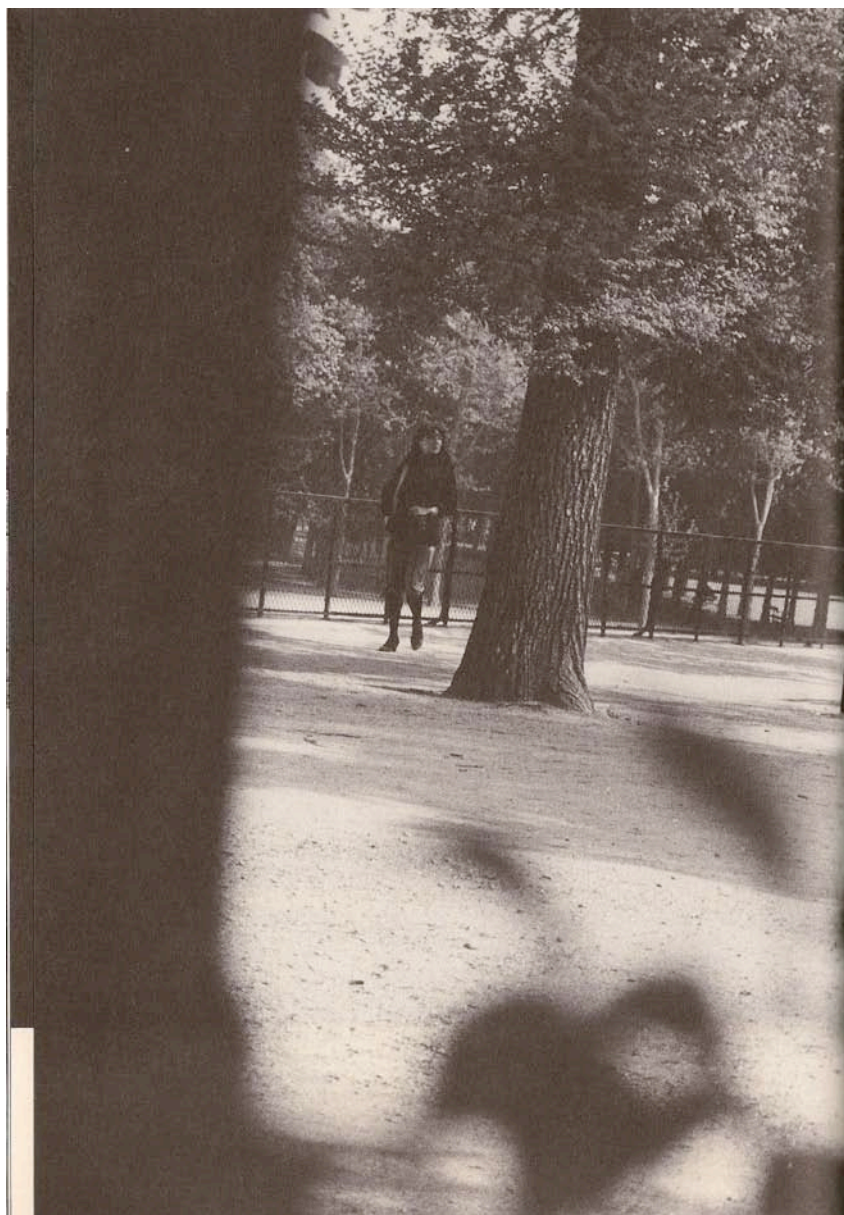


At 3:20 the subject
takes a drink at the
outdoor café in the
Tuileries gardens
and writes.

At 3:55 the subject
leaves the café and
heads for the Place de
la Concorde.

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Sophie Calle's Double Game - "The Detective"



At 4:25 she enters the Palais de la Découverte and meets a man aged about fifty, 5'8", slim, with metal-framed spectacles; he is wearing white trousers, a beige canvas jacket, and a gray hat. The subject and the man hold hands and walk around the museum.

At 5:10 the subject and the man leave the Palais de la Découverte and head toward rue Franklin-D-Roosevelt where, after kissing, they part outside number 1. The man gets behind the wheel of a white Range Rover, license number 383 BKX 75, and drives off.

At 5:25 the subject goes into the Gaumont-Colisée cinema at 36 avenue des Champs-Élysées to see the film "Lili Marleen".

At 7:25 the subject leaves the cinema and goes into the Franklin-Roosevelt metro station where she boards a train bound for Pont-de-Sèvres. She changes at Trocadéro and takes the direction Nation.

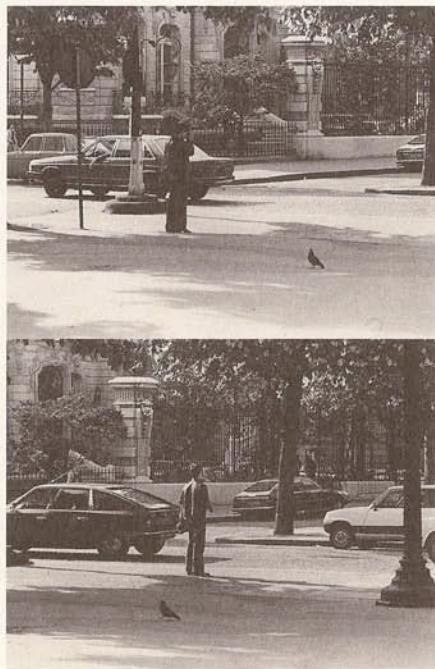
At 7:55 the subject gets off the train at the station Denfert-Rochereau.

At 8:00 the subject returns home.
The surveillance ends.

I wanted to have a souvenir of the person who would be following me. I didn't know which day of the week the tailing would take place, so I asked François M to be outside the Palais de la Découverte every day at 5 P.M. and to photograph anyone who seemed to be tailing me. I received the following report, accompanied by a set of photographs: "Thursday, April 16, 1981, at about 5:15 P.M., Sophie Calle came out of the Palais de la Découverte. I immediately noticed that she was being followed by a young man aged about twenty-five, in a leather jacket, with a camera round his neck and a bag over his shoulder. He was walking about twenty meters behind her and photographed her at the first cross-roads. I, in turn, photographed him. We entered avenue Franklin-Roosevelt and crossed the Champs-Élysées.

"At 5:25 Sophie Calle entered the Gaumont-Colisée cinema. The man waited for a few moments; I think he was noting the times of the showings. Then he continued on his way up the avenue to the Lord Byron, where the poster had *Emmanuelle* and *The Daughters of Madame D*.

"At 5:30 the man went into the cinema and that was the last I saw of him."



Sophie Calle's Double Game - "The Detective"